



# Aging on the Farm

## SUCCESS STORIES



### THE PROBLEM

There are more older workers in agriculture than in any other industry, with **1 in 3 U.S. farmers over 65 years old**. The impacts of aging can make the hazardous environment of agricultural work **even more dangerous**.



### OUR RESPONSE:

UMASH learned from aging farmers and their support systems that their biggest concerns about aging on the farm were **accessing healthcare, managing stress and anxiety, maintaining balance and coordination, and preventing musculoskeletal injuries**.

➔ **UMASH responded to these concerns by partnering with innovative teams in the Upper Midwest.**

## AGING ON THE FARM PARTNER PROJECTS

### University of Minnesota Occupational Therapy (OT)



The OT program facilitated virtual programming to five rural farmers across Minnesota to **reduce pain, improve balance and mobility, and continue activities of daily living**. OT students gained clinical experience working with rural farmers, designing two webinars available at: [umash.umn.edu/aging-umot](http://umash.umn.edu/aging-umot)

- Farmers participated in a **6-session telehealth OT program** where they learned practical strategies to help them adapt to age-related changes like hearing and vision loss, arthritis, memory loss, and more.
- **80% of farmers felt better able to manage changes related to aging** after participating.
- This project showed that **telehealth OT is an effective and accessible solution** to help rural farmers adapt to changes that come with aging.

### United Church of Christ Zumbrota and Normandale Center for Healing and Wholeness



This project established a “Healthy Aging on the Farm” team of four faith-based organizations in a rural Minnesota county to **ask farmers about concerns about aging on the farm** and how the community could support them.

- Farmers shared their greatest challenges of aging on the farm: **maintaining their overall health and mobility and finding help with chores**.
- **Help at home and adapting their home to be safer**, like installing handrails and ramps, would make aging at home easier for many farmers.
- The team plans to create a **resource guide to increase awareness and usage** of programs available in local communities for aging farmers. They also hope to share findings with legislators to **advocate for more services** for aging farmers.

### PARTNER PROJECTS *(cont.)*

#### University of Wisconsin Occupational Therapy and American Parkinson's Disease Association's Wisconsin Chapter



These partners **created and distributed "Active@Home" toolkits** to 30 Wisconsinites living with Parkinson's disease. The toolkits contained 11 practical items, such as a stretch strap and a modified jar opener, to make physical and mental activity easier for people with Parkinson's disease. They also **offered telehealth programming** to educate how to use each item to improve their symptoms.

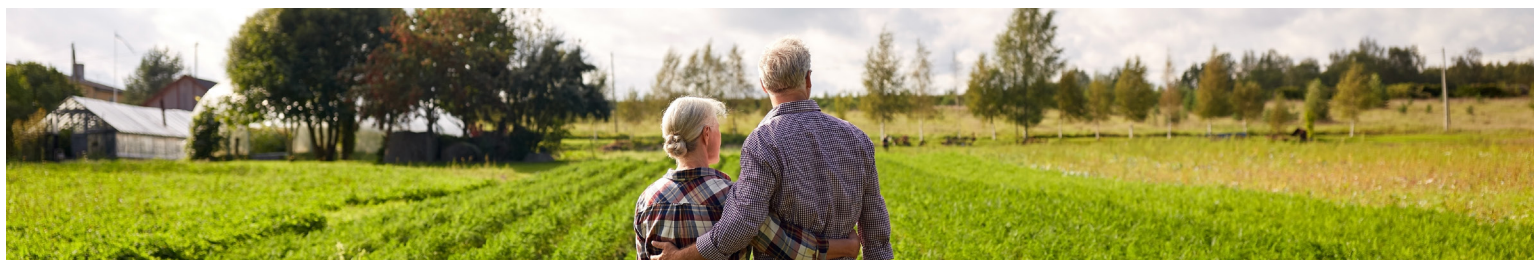
- Households shared that the program and toolkit were **very beneficial in their daily lives**.
- Students on the project **gained valuable clinical and cultural skills** working with rural farmers with Parkinson's disease, preparing them to work with future rural clients.
- In February of 2023, the team submitted a proposal for the program to be evaluated in a clinical trial - to **increase the availability of programs like this** in rural communities.

#### Big Stone County Area Memory Loss Connections



This project offered dementia training and hosted community gatherings to strengthen dementia support systems in their community. They also created "memory loss kits" which included items like toy tractors and farm magazines to **reduce the anxiety of memory loss** and bring back memories of life on the farm.

- The 25 memory loss kits were checked out more than 80 times from a local library.
- Over 120 **physicians, nurses, and community members were trained** to improve the quality of care for older adults with dementia. The training **built connections** between healthcare providers and a local neuropsychologist, **making diagnosing and referring patients to dementia care** easier and quicker.
- Over **215 community members gathered** for the "memory loss cafes" to **build community, share resources, and increase their understanding** of dementia.



LEARN MORE AT  
[umash.umn.edu/aging](http://umash.umn.edu/aging)